

Soft Drinks and School-Age Children

Tips for Talking with Reporters

Know your subject

No matter how knowledgeable you are about the subject, never go to an interview unprepared. Even if a reporter calls and says he or she is on deadline and "just needs to confirm a fact" or "get a quote," don't be pressured into responding if you don't have the correct information. Ask reporters for their deadline and get back to them after you check your facts, and BEFORE their deadline.

Be honest

If you don't know the answer, say so. Offer to find out if you can, and call back. If you feel someone else may be more knowledgeable, refer the reporter to that person. Reliable sources are valuable to reporters and you may get more calls in the future. Contact the person whose name you gave to the reporter to provide some advance notice of a potential call.

Be prompt

Always ask, "What is your deadline?" Offer to do some brief research and then do it. Don't feel pressure to answer on the spot. Do respect the media's tight deadlines.

Know your audience

Keep in mind who you are trying to reach and what they will want to know.

Stick to key message

Identify 2-3 key messages you want to get across. Stick to those messages. Make your points simple and brief. Keep your answers to the reporter's questions short. Don't wander off with long involved answers.

Communicate in sound bites

These are short, precise statements that get your message out clearly and quickly. Practice ahead of time so you will be ready.

Offer background information

Data, graphics, audiovisuals, props and the names of knowledgeable health and education professionals will make your story more attractive. Be prepared to reference your data or statistics.

Return phone calls from reporters

Call reporters back even if it's just to say you can't talk right now but will get back to them later. Don't let a story appear that says you couldn't be reached for comment.

Avoid jargon

Translate technical information into layman's terms. Use short, catchy phrases to make it interesting.

Be gracious

If a reporter covers your program, write a thank-you note.